

## Dose of Forgiveness

As a licensed professional counselor, I am not authorized to prescribe medications. My clients' authorized medical professionals must do that. I CAN prescribe something that is of great benefit to my clients' physical, mental, spiritual and emotional health, however. All of my clients are instructed to take a daily "dose of forgiveness."

The idea is not original. It is mentioned in the familiar Lord's Prayer found in the Bible - Matthew 6:9-13. This prayer makes reference to daily bread and immediately follows with the forgiveness request. ("...Give us this day our DAILY bread./And Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ..." - (emphasis mine).

According to the Bible, if you forgive those who sin against you, God will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, God will not forgive your sins (Matthew 6:14-15).

Dr. Don Colbert, a graduate of Oral Roberts School of Medicine and author of "Toxic Emotions," wrote in the May 2006 issue of "Enjoying Everyday Life": "Forgiveness releases layers of hurt and heals the raw, jagged edges of emotional pain. It enables a persona to release buried anger, resentment, bitterness, shame, grief, regret, guilt, hate, and other toxic emotions that hide deep in the soul, making a person ill - both emotionally and physically.

"As a physician, I frequently treat people with physical problems that I feel are rooted in bitterness and unforgiveness."

Colbert said he considers bitterness, resentment and unforgiveness to be among the deadliest emotions a person can have. These emotions actually prevent the body from releasing toxic material. The buildup of this toxic material in the body can eventually lead to disease. Colbert is convinced that prolonged bitterness can lead to autoimmune disease and contribute to gallbladder disease.

A recent Mayo Clinic article by Katherine Piderman revealed there here have been studies by researchers on forgiveness issues as they relate to overall health. Evidence seems to show that holding grudges and harboring bitterness can result in long-term health problems.

Fortunately, there is a solution - forgiveness. Forgiveness is said to lower blood pressure, reduce stress, lower heart rate, reduce chronic pain, reduce anxiety, reduce risk of addiction and improve psychological well-being. Practicing the art of forgiveness gives countless spiritual benefits, healthier relationships and more friendships.

Forgiveness is frequently misunderstood. Some of my clients feel that in forgiving they are saying that it was OK for their offender to offend with insensitive words, attitudes or even in extreme cases, physical and mental torture. Forgiveness was never intended to justify harm; in fact, just the opposite. Forgiveness spiritually releases the victim from the perpetrator.

Forgiveness is an act of the will like exercise, not necessarily something you feel like doing. It can sometimes take some time to fully complete the forgiveness process, especially in deep

offenses. At other times, forgiveness come much easier and we cleanse our inner being just as we take a daily shower to cleanse our outside.

"Nearly everyone has been hurt by the actions or words of another," Piderman said. Your mother criticized your parenting skills. Your friend gossiped about you. Your partner had an affair. These wounds can leave you with lasting feelings of anger, bitterness and even.